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Excerpts From Fulbright's Speech on Vietnam War

Following are excerpts from the speech prepared for delivery by Senator J. W. Fulbright before the Bureau of Advertising of the American Newspaper Publishers Association last night:

I would like to talk with you tonight about the fallout effects of the Vietnamese War in three areas — our relations with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, relations with our allies in Western Europe and the internal impact within the United States.

Because some of my observations will be critical of American policy, it seems in order to say a preliminary word about criticism. I believe that the citizen who criticizes his country is paying it an implied tribute: at the very leass it means that he has not given up on his country, that he still has hopes for it. More often, the critic is motivated by high regard for the society he lives in and for its promise; in this case the vigor of his criticism is the measure of the gap he perceives between promise and performance. The ideological aspect of the Vietnamese war is slowly undermining good relations between the United States and Eastern Europe. The detente whose progress was generating such optimism hardly more than a year ago, has been arrested and a slow, steady erosion has set in.

How far it will go, and with what unfortunate results, will be determined by the future course and scale of the war in Vietnam.

Restraint by Russians

The principal reason why things are not a lot worse than they are is the restraint shown by the Russians with respect to the war. They are providing the North Vietnamese with a steady flow of supplies, including the ground-to-air missiles that are used against American aircraft but they show no inclination to participate directly in the war and even their anti-American propaganda is comparatively mild.

If positions were reversed, if the Russians were conducting daily bombing raids against an American ally, it is just about inconceivable that we would confine ourselves to providing equipment to the ckuntry under attack. If we did, one can well imagine the field day the superpatriots would have charging our Government with cowardice and treason.

My feeling abut the matter is that the Russians are frightened of us not only because of our enormous power but also because of our erratic behaviour in such places as Vietnam and the Dominican Republic, which may make our policies seem, from their viewpoint, dangerously unpredictable.

What is wrong with that? it may be asked. What is wrong with it is that it puts Soviet-American relations on an exceedingly unstable basis. Though not as powerful as the United States, Russia is a very great power and it is unlikely to be restrained indefinitely by fear of the United States.

As long as the Vietnamese war is fought on its present scale, the Russians may remain essentially outside of the conflict — although that is by no means certain. But if the war is significantly expanded, the Russians will be brought under mounting Chinese goading for standing aside while the Americans devastate a Soviet ally. With their prestige thus impaired, fear could give way to anger, and the Russinas might then take the enormous risk of direct intervention in the war.

Loss of Opportunities

For the present, the main fallout effect of the war on East-West relations is the loss of the opportunities associated with the American policy of building bridges to the East. The significance of that loss is great indeed; it amounts to the suspension of progress toward normal relations between the two great nations which hold the power of life and death over all of humanity. One may hope that that hopefull evolution of Soviet-American relations will be resunied, but it certainly cannot be counted upon.

Soviet-American cooperation in bringing about the ceasefire lust September in the India-Pakistan war is one example of the kind of beneficial collaboration that the Vietnamese war makes increasingly difficult.

There are other areas of the world, and other kinds of issues, on which the Russians and Americans could collaborate through the United Nations, but for the fallout from Vietnam.

Even at the time of the Kashmir war, however, American officials were at pains to describe their cooperation with the Russians as a policy of "parallelism," using that word, apparently, to dispel the notion that any similarity in Soviet and American interests could be more than an accident and to reassure people in general that the cold war was still on.

One recent casualty of the Vietnamese war was a consular convention between the Soviet Union and the United States signed in June, 1964, and still unratified by the Senate although it was reported favorably by the Foreign Relations Committee last Aug. 3. The convention is essentially an arrangement for the facilitation of travel and the orderly conduct of business between the Soviet Union and the United States.

Approved by Committee

Opposition developed over this treaty after its approval by the Foreign Relations Committee. J. Edgar Hoover was widely quoted as having said that the establishment of Soviet consulates would make the work of the F.B.I. "more difficult." And a right-wing extremist organization called the Liberty Lobby deluged Senators with mail denouncing the treaty.

Another straw in an ill wind was the rupture last year of negotiations between the Rumanian Government and the Firestone Tire and Rubber Company for the design and engineering of two synthetic rubber plants as the result of pressures applied in an anti-Communist crusade conducted by a junior extremist organization and a Firestone competitor.

The Vietnamese war thus far has had three major "fallout" effects on East-West relations: first, it has generated a degree of hostility toward the United States on the part of Eastern European nations which otherwise are most anxious to expand economic, cultural and even political relations with the West; second, it has weakened the drive of the Eastern European countries toward greater independence of the Soviet Union; third, it has put a severe strain on the Soviet-American detente, reducing whatever hope there may have been for a general nuclear test ban and a nonproliferation agreement.

East-West relations now hinge on the war in Vietnam. If it goes on indefinitely, or if it is greatly escalated, it will destroy prospects for accommodation on issues ranging from trade to arms control and the future of Germany, and eventually it may bring the Russians—to say nothing of the Chinese—into direct conflict with the United States. If these things happen, then the fallout from Vietnam will indeed be far more destructive than the war itself.

Effects on Allies

The effects of the Vietnamese war on America's relations with its Western European allies [illegible] Ameri-

to assess.

The most obvious fact is that our major allies are not supporting us in Vietnam. There are three possible explanations for their refusal to participate in the war, each of which, if valid, suggests that there is something wrong with American policy.

First, they may believe that it simply does not matter, from the viewpoint of their own security, who wins the Vietnamese war. Or, secondly, they may believe that their security is affected but there is no point in becoming involved because the United States, under what has been called the "Rusk doctrine," is unilaterally committed to resist any and all threats to the free world and will take all the risks and accept all the costs regardless of what anyone else does.

And finally, our allies may have judged that it is neither necessary nor possible for a Western army to fight a successful land war on the Asian mainland and that their security, and ours, can be defended from the islands and waters off the coast of Asia where our sea and air power is dominant.

It is contended by American policy-makers that if the United States makes major concessions in Vietnam the credibility of our other guarantees and commitments will be undermined and countries which depend on American support, from Thailand to German, will lose faith in the United States.

As H. L. Mencken once said there is something in this but not much. In fact, many of America's allies are more inclined to worry about an undue American preoccupatio with Vietnam than to fear the consequences of an American withdrawal, provided that withdrawal were orderly and based on a negotiated agreement.

Effect on NATO Seen

I suspect that the American involvement in Vietnam has something to do with the current crisis in NATO. President de Gaulle said as much in his press conference of last Feb. 21, citing as one reason for his decision to withdraw French forces from NATO what he perceives to be a danger that the United States may drag its European partners into non-European wars.

One detects in Europe a growing uneasiness about American policy, a feeling that the United States is becoming unreliable and that it may be better — safer, that is — to keep the Americans at a dista nce.

Continued

can to look at his country as a European may see it. I would guess that the European looking at America today feels overawed rather than reassured by our tremendous power — by the power of our nuclear weapons and rockets and the power of the world's greatest and possibly fastest growing economy.

In an irrational but human way they may be more appalled than impressed by the existence of such great power, even though they are dependent on it for their own security.

I am inclined to wonder to if the current reluctance of European ciuntries to accept responsibilities outside of their own region is not indirectly related to the American military involvement in southeast Asia.

Insofar as that involvement implies a willingness on the part of the United States to act as a global policeman, even though it must do so with no more than token support from a few allies, Europeans may be encouraged to believe that, even if their interests are involved in Vietnam or in any other crisis, there is really no need to get involved because the Americans will take care of it anyway.

'War Fever' Seen

The war in southeast Asia has affected the internal life of the United States in two important ways: it has diverted our energies from the Great Society program which began so promisingly a year ago, and it has generated the beginning of a war fever in the minds of the American people and their leaders.

Despite brave talk about having both "guns and butter," the Vietnamese war has already had a destructive effect on the Great Society. The 89th Congress, which enacted so much important domestic legislation in 1965, is enacting very little in 1966, partly it is true because of last year's unusual productivity, but more because the Congress as a whole has lost interest in the Great Society; it has become politically and psychologically a "war Congress."

My own views that there is a kind of madness in the facile assumption that we can raise the many billions of dollars necessary to rebuild our schools and cities and public transport and eliminate the pollution of air and water while also spending tens of billions to finance an "open-ended" war in Asia.

But even if the material resources can somehow be drawn from an expanding economy, I do not think that the spiritual resources will long be forthcoming from an angry and disappointed people.

There is a kind of Gresham's law of public policy: fear drives out hope, security precedes welfare and it is only to the extent that a country is successful in the prevention of bad things that it is set free to concentrate on those pursuits which bring happiness into the lives of its people.

The turning away from these pursuits after so brief an interlude is the first and at present more conspicuous fallout effect of the war on American life.

The second, and potentially more damaging, is the stirring up of a war fever in the minds of our people and leaders; it is only just now getting under way, but, as the war goes on, as the casualty lists grow longer and affect more and more American homes, the fever will rise and the patience of the American people will give way to mounting demands for an expanded war, for a lightning blow that will get it over with at a stroke.

There has already been a marked change in the kinds of things we think about and talk about in America. A few years ago — even some months ago—we were talking of détente and "building bridges," of five-year plans in India and Pakistan, of agricultural cooperatives in the Dominican Republic and land and tax reform all over Latin America.

Today these subjects have an antique ring. Instead of emphasizing plans for social change, the policy planners and political scientists are conjuring up "scenarios" of escalation and nuclear confrontation and "models" of insurgency and counterinsurgency; in Latin America they seem more interested in testing the "images" of armies than in the progress of social reform.

Change in Attention

There can be no doubt that the major cause of this change in our national vocabulary is the war. Just about every day millions of Americans see stories and pictures of battle on the front pages of their newspapers and on their television screens. All this war news must have its effects: the diversion of attention from domestic pursuits, the gradual dehumanizing of the enemy, rising levels of tension, anger, war-weariness and bellicosity.

America is showing some signs of that fatal presumption, that overextension of power and mission, which brought ruin to ancient Athens, to Napoleonic France and to Nazi Germany. The process has hardly begun, but the war which we are now fighting can only accelerate it.

If the war goes on and expands, if that fatal process continues to accelerate until America becomes what it is not now and never has been, a seeker after unlimited power and empire, then Vietnam will have had a mighty and tragic fallout indeed.

I do not believe that will happen. I am very apprehensive but I still remain hopeful, and even confident, that America, with its humane and democratic traditions, will find the wisdom to match its power.